

REMARKS

The last Office Action has been carefully considered.

It is noted that claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over the patent to Chaudoreille, et al.

The claims are also objected for formal reasons.

In connection with the Examiner's formal objections, applicants have amended claim 9 as required by the Examiner. As for claims 1 and 15, it is respectfully submitted that the alleged problems with the claims most probably are caused by a fax transmission to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, since in the applicant's version the corresponding expressions are presented in a proper way.

After carefully considering the Examiner's grounds for the rejection of the claims over the art, applicants amended claims 1 and 15, the broadest independent claims, to more clearly define the present invention and to distinguish it from the prior art.

In particular, the claims have been amended to define that in the inventive connection element the thin metallic art coating is a surface

treatment which is inseparable from the at least one abutment surface. This language has been discussed with the Examiner, and the Examiner indicated that it would patentably distinguish the present invention from the prior art.

Turning now to the reference and in particular to the patent to Chaudoreille applied by the Examiner against the original claims, it is respectfully submitted that in the connecting element disclosed in this reference the thin metallic hard coating is not configured as a surface treatment which is inseparable from the abutment surface.

It is therefore believed that this reference does not teach the new features of the present invention which are now defined in the amended claims 1 and 15. Also, the references does not contain any hint or suggestion for such a thin metallic coating which is formed in accordance with the present invention as now defined in the amended claims 1 and 15, in the sense of 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

It is believed that the rejection of the original claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) should be considered as not tenable with respect to the amended claims 1 and 15.

Claims 1 and 15 should be considered as patentably distinguishing over the art and should be allowed.

As for the dependent claims, these claims depend on the corresponding independent claims, and they should be considered as allowable also.

Claim 16 in addition defines the feature that the thin metallic hard coating is also applied in threaded openings of the connection element, which feature is not disclosed in the reference. Therefore claims 16 should be considered as patentably distinguishing over the art not only because it depends on the presumably allowable claim 15, but also because it contains the allowable subject matter *per se*.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application is most respectfully submitted.

Should the Examiner require or consider it advisable that the specification, claims and/or drawings be further amended or corrected in formal respects in order to place this case in condition for final allowance, then it is respectfully requested that such amendments or corrections be carried out by Examiner's Amendment, and the case be passed to issue. Alternatively, should the Examiner feel that a personal discussion might be

helpful in advancing this case to allowance, he is invited to telephone the
undersigned (at 631-549-4700).

Respectfully submitted,


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